



SHOOTING UP TO DATE.

(A Suggestion for Next Season.)

THE KING OF PORTUGAL HAVING SET THE FASHION FOR "TRICK" SHOOTING WITH ONE HAND, MR. PUNCH HOPES THE ABOVE SUGGESTIONS MAY BE USEFUL IN THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA, WHICH MIGHT TEND GREATLY TO ENLIVEN THE MONOTONY OF THE ORDINARY DAY'S SPORT.

THE RIPOSTE.

[The following letter, somewhat delayed in transmission, is generally supposed to be—in substance—the answer to a now notorious challenge, issued to Mr. W-NST-N CH-RCH-LL.]

SIR,—I herewith, by him I humbly serve, am
Directed to reply that yours to hand
Reminds him of the saying *Sus Minervam*,
In other words, he does not understand

Your folly; he believes that no such instance
Of braggadocio has yet occurred,
So far as memory serves him, since his (W-NST-N's)
Inspired career became a household word.

Do you suppose that one who lends to Culture
His practised pen, who on the lonely veld
Met unafraid the predatory Vulture,
Will stoop to punch *your* miserable pelt?

Has he then dragged the name of CH-RCH-LL into
The path of Fame, to fight with common roughs?
Was it for this he won renown akin to
A liver pill's, by memorable puffs?

Became the costliest gem at once adorning
The Government and Opposition ranks,

The Star of Freedom, erstwhile of the *Morning Post*?—to be brief, Sir, he declines with thanks

Your challenge; not because, presumptuous stranger,
He fears you, or anticipates defeat,
But honour calls him to preserve from danger
His Dignity, his Country, and his Seat.

The Tariff Question in Russia.

FROM a Provincial paper's summary of Mr. ARNOLD-FORSTER'S speech at Croydon:—"He was sure the people of England desired that the peasants of Russia should enter into the heritage of liberty and freedom which we all enjoyed, and had obtained through the sacrifices of our forefathers. He expressed a belief in the ultimate success of those who favoured Tariff reform."

Certainly, if Mr. ARNOLD-FORSTER is right in his reading of the mental attitude assumed by the populace at St. Petersburg, they should have an excellent chance of realising their ambition. Judged by the number of troops told off to block the way to Tsarskoe Selo, the Czar is as keen as anybody for Protection.

DARE PONDUS FUMO.—To give way to smoking.

TEUTON TO TARTAR.

[The official German Press approves the "tranquillising" methods employed by the Russian Bureaucracy. At a meeting of students in Berlin a collection for the wounded in St. Petersburg was stopped by a police official.]

Now is the time to test the links of steel,
And prove the brotherhood of caste and kind,
When wanton Anarchy lifts up her heel
Against Official Order Heaven-designed;
Let Eagles of the right Imperial feather
Stand beak by jowl and claw by spur together.

We will not fail you in the unequal fight,
If Prussia's pen may hearten Russia's sword,
You who so bravely held the bridges tight,—
HORATH, bold to face a countless horde,
And kept unsullied that majestic halo
Circling the sacred Head at Tsarskoe Selo.

Neighbours already bound by natural ties
A common peril makes us doubly kin!
That riot which deranged your wintry skies—
Had it occurred at Potsdam (near Berlin),
Had local Anarchy her lips protruded,
We trust we should have served her much as you did!

For this our officers rehearse, in play,
With such materials as they can get;
Thus, should a lower-class civilian pay
Imperfect homage to an épaulette,
They make his gore incarnadine the gutter,
And have the corpse removed upon a shutter.

One spirit animates us both, you see,
Though *here* Sedition lurks in covert lairs;
It does not spread itself across the Spree,
Or flout our Uhlans in the open squares;
We get no chance, so secretly it hatches,
To take and mow it down in solid batches.

Here, where the Socialist who speaks his mind
Is merely clapped in quad, and nothing more,
Your splendid Cossack Chivalry would find
Our life beneath the lindens such a bore;
Nor, frankly, could we hope, suppose we had him here,
To occupy an active type like VLADIMIR.

Yet we are with you. Can the same be said
Of those your "dear allies" (the empty phrase!)
Whose sign is Revolution's cap of red,
Whose solemn anthem is the *Marseillaise*?
You know the air? Your Sunday rabble sang it
Until the rifles' loyal roar outrang it!

'Tis music made to rouse the savage breast,
And nerve the arm to menace tottering thrones,
Yet, by an irony too long confessed
In Europe's laughter melting all her bones,
Your hands perform it *militari tubā*
When NICHOLAS embraces brother LOUBET!

You flattered France, just then in lonely need,
And took her bullion: that was in the bond;
But now you crave a twin Imperial creed,
Tastes like your own, ideals which respond;
Well, Teuton sympathy (and coal) each minute is
Giving fresh proof of our profound affinities.

O. S.

From the *Dublin Evening Mail*:

LAWYERS CEASE WORK.
NO FURTHER TROUBLES IN MOSCOW.

QUEEN SYLVIA.

CHAPTER XI.

The Lord Chancellor's Lecture.

WHEN the Queen came home from the foreign expedition described in the last chapter she was, as it is almost unnecessary to say, received with what I can only call a perfectly exultant display of popular enthusiasm. For a few days everybody seemed to go mad with joy and loyalty, and all the newspapers teemed with articles in which praise was lavished on the extraordinary diplomatic skill of a lady who, in spite of her youth, had been able in the space of one short afternoon to win from King OTHO so complete an acknowledgment of the justice of all the claims that the most experienced of Hinterland's statesmen had urged in vain. It is quite safe to say that no monarch so well beloved as SYLVIA had ever sat on the throne and given a tone to social life. King OTHO also was very well spoken of by the generous press of Hinterland. That he had done a handsome thing in thus withdrawing his decrees was admitted even by those who felt it their duty to point out that a policy of discretion no less than a temperate regard for justice must in any case have compelled him to yield to a power so strong in her armaments and so manifestly right in her arguments as Hinterland.

One morning, not long after her return, SYLVIA paid her mother a visit at the house assigned to the Grand Duchess. This visit was no ordinary one. In order that she might have a good working knowledge of the laws by which both she and her subjects were governed, SYLVIA had requested the Lord Chancellor to deliver to her a series of six lectures illustrated, wherever it might be necessary, with lime-light lantern slides, the room being temporarily darkened for this purpose when the lecture chanced to be given in the daytime. The old gentleman had readily consented to lay open the stores of his knowledge for the benefit of his sovereign, and to allow the Vice-Chancellor to take his place in the Supreme Court for the time being. The introductory lecture had already been given, and this morning was appointed for the delivery of the second. The Grand Duchess having expressed a desire to hear what the Lord Chancellor had to say, SYLVIA had arranged that this lecture should be given in the house of her mother, who was still confined by the doctor's orders to her own apartments. Hither then came the Lord Chancellor, accompanied by the Attorney-General, who had consented to manage the lantern for him; and hither, too, came SYLVIA, attended (reluctantly) by her Naval Blue-Stick-in-Waiting (who, as you and I know, was none other than HILDEBRAND, her father), and by her Lady of the Bedchamber, who in less fortunate days had been known as SARAH, the general servant. The party being thus complete, the Lord Chancellor began his lecture:—

"Your Majesty," he said, "will remember that in my first discourse I was privileged to lay before you a general *conspectus*, if I may so term it, of the origin and growth of law in this country."

"And very interesting it was," put in SYLVIA in an encouraging voice. "I shall ask you to let me see the manuscript again, for I regret to say that I have lost my notes."

"The manuscript," said the Lord Chancellor stiffly, "is at your Majesty's service. Before I proceed," he resumed, "to speak of the wider departments of our laws as they affect property, the liberty of the subject, the processes of our criminal courts, and other matters related to these, I judge it convenient to lay before your Lordships—"

"We are not Lordships," said SYLVIA, smiling.

"Your Majesty's pardon is begged," said the Lord Chancellor. "My long habit of addressing the Supreme Court has led me astray. I judge it convenient to lay before your Majesty, with such slight comments as the subject warrants,



THE POLITICAL ANCIENT MARINER.

"GOD SAVE THEE, ANCIENT MARINER,
FROM THE FIENDS THAT PLAGUE THEE THUS!
WHY LOOK'ST THOU SO?'—'WITH MY CROSS-BOW
I SHOT THE ALBATROSS!'—Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner."



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MOST UNFORTUNATE.

Mother (who wants to be very nice to bachelor uncle, understood to have made his pile in Australia). "Now, CHARLIE, you've NEVER SEEN UNCLE BEFORE. GO AND SHAKE HANDS."

Charlie. "OH YES, MOTHER, I HAVE SEEN HIM BEFORE, I'M SURE—AT LAST YEAR'S PANTOMIME!"

the fundamental laws, as they are called, which affect members of the Royal House itself more particularly."

"Fundamental laws?" said SYLVIA. "Why are they called that? It sounds very tremendous and alarming, doesn't it, Mamma?"

"Hush, my dear," said her mother. "Let us attend closely to what the Chancellor has to say."

"They are called fundamental," continued the Lord Chancellor, "because they are unalterable. All other laws are subject to the power of abrogation or amendment constitutionally inherent in the estates of the realm. The fundamental laws of the Royal House, however, are exempt from this."

"You make me shudder," said SYLVIA.

"I will begin with the Marriage Law. Mr. Attorney, will you be good enough to throw on the screen the picture of the great King HILDEBRAND promulgating the Marriage Law."

Instantly, with a deftness born of long practice in the bosom of his own numerous family, the Attorney-General drew the curtains before the windows and projected from the magic lantern the required picture.

"Splendid!" cried SYLVIA. "And, oh do look, King HILDEBRAND is the very image, beard and all, of my Naval Blue-Stick-in-Waiting, isn't he?"

The resemblance was certainly striking, but, the room

being in darkness, it was not possible at the moment for the other spectators to make a comparison. The heart of the Naval Blue-Stick was beating fast and his breath came short, but he uttered no word.

"Thank you, Mr. Attorney," said the Chancellor; "that will do."

The picture vanished; the curtains were pulled back, and the room became light once more.

"Strange," said the Grand Duchess, gazing at the Naval Blue-Stick, who had withdrawn into a dark corner of the room. "Strange. The likeness is distinct. I wonder who that man is."

But the voice of the Lord Chancellor had begun again:—

"The chief provisions of the law are these"—he opened a heavy volume and began reading from it—"It shall be lawful for every male of the blood royal to contract a marriage, subject in all cases to the limitations—hum—hum—I need not read all that—at the age of eighteen years. It shall be lawful for females of the blood royal, subject as aforesaid, to contract a marriage at the age of seventeen years."

"I've got nearly a year to wait," cried SYLVIA.

"Hush, my darling," said her mother reproachfully.

"But," continued the Lord Chancellor, still reading, "no female whatsoever of the blood royal shall in any case or at any age be permitted to contract a marriage unless she shall have

beforehand obtained the consent in writing of both her parents, but such consent shall not be unreasonably withheld."

"Great Heavens," said the Grand Duchess in a voice of alarm. "What's that you're saying?"

The Lord Chancellor read the passage again.

"But, man alive," cried the Grand Duchess, all but forgetting her politeness in her agitation, "how can such an absurdity exist? What if one parent or both should die before a child grows up? Is she never to marry? Is my daughter to remain unmarried all her life since her father is dead?"

"I had not thought of that," said the Lord Chancellor in dignified accents, "but it would have made no difference. It has been the universal custom," he went on, "for members of the Royal House on their marriage to sign forms of permission in blank, and to store them with the Bank of Hinterland in case of eventualities. The law has winked at this; indeed it is lawful on the authority of decided cases. Did your Highness omit to do this?"

"Alas, I forgot," wailed the Grand Duchess. "How shall I ever gain forgiveness from my Queen and daughter? We were young and thoughtless, HILDEBRAND and I, and we lived away from the Court and our relations."

During this scene the agitation of the Naval Blue-Stick had been painful. His breast heaved, his hands were twitching convulsively, and more than once he seemed to be on the point of speaking, but each time he mastered himself and remained silent. He had only to say, "I am the Queen's father, I am ready to give my consent to her marriage whenever it may be necessary," and the difficulty would vanish at once, but by so doing he would rob her of the sovereignty and step into her place. No, he could not bring himself to do it.

"Oh, Mamma," said SYLVIA at last, "what does it matter? Nobody wants to marry me yet, so why trouble?"

At this moment the door opened, and the Grand Duchess's butler in a ceremonial voice announced:—

"A Special Emissary from King OTHO of Eisenblut craves an immediate audience of her Majesty."

MUCH ADO.

As the accredited Representative of *Mr. Punch* at the Play, I have always held that for audience, critics, and performers, the first night of any piece, be it what it may, is almost sure to be its worst night. Therefore I prefer seeing any piece after it has been running for a short time. What the success of *Much Ado about Nothing*, produced at His Majesty's, Tuesday the 24th, will be, when the piece, written by that ever youthful author WILLIE SHAKESPEARE, plays more closely, and when the actors shall have reconsidered certain important points of their impersonations, may be fairly prophesied from its first performance before the highly appreciative audience that witnessed its *première*.

Great praise is due to Mr. SYDNEY BROUGH for his admirable make-up as *Don Pedro*, *Prince of Arragon*, and no doubt by the time this article appears he will have meditated on his present elevation in rank, and will have refined his manners and have dropped such actions as are scarcely compatible with princely dignity at that period. His bilious brother *Don John* is played by Mr. LAURENCE IRVING in the true melodramatic spirit of deepest-dyed villainy, and, occasionally, of absolutely impish mischief. Mr. BASIL GILL bears himself soberly as the lover, the rather colourless *Claudio*.

Mr. HENRY NEVILLE must be heartily congratulated on his masterly, his quite old-masterly, portrait of *Leonato*, whom he, correctly as I think, represents not as a Duke, Prince, or Grandee, but as a type of the honest mediæval bourgeois, a millionaire, who, having made his pile in trade (perhaps as a cloth-and-carpet-maker), and being personally

immensely popular (for who could resist so effusive a geniality?), has been unanimously elected *Governor of Messina*, a dignity equivalent, let us say, to that of my Lord Mayor of London, to which Governorship he brings all the overpoweringly demonstrative courtesy that is the distinctive mark of the civic dignitary, be he Mercer, Haberdasher, Pewterer, Grocer, Loriner, or Tallow-chandler. Now to the stolid, cautiously-working, commercial brain of *Leonato*, the preposterously farcical idea of presenting to *Claudio* the real *Hero* (supposed to be dead and buried) as *Hero's* cousin, whom *Claudio* is to espouse, could never have occurred; but to his brother, elder or junior it matters not, the excitable and irascible old gentleman *Antonio* (capitally played by Mr. FISHER WHITE), this absurd notion might have suggested itself (is he not the parent of the eccentric *Beatrice*?), and then what more natural than that the chuckling old *Antonio*, without a second thought, should have imparted, whisperingly, this brilliantly original notion to his brother *Leonato*, while the Prince and *Claudio* (on in the same scene) are engaged in conversation? This is a point Mr. TREE has overlooked. I commend its consideration to the next Shakspearian revivalist. It relieves *Antonio* from being regarded as a merely irascible old pantaloon, and fairly adjusts the balance of character.

Little boy *Balthazar*, Master THOMAS SAMPSON, was exceptionally good, and his singing deserved the encore which was decorously nipped in the bud. Mr. LOUIS CALVERT is as stolid an idiot as *Dogberry* ought to be, and Mr. LIONEL BROUGH keeps himself within the picture as *Verges*. The scenic arrangement that makes them appear at their bedroom windows is, to my mind, quite ineffective, and deprives the two low comedians of such excellent legitimate business as used to illustrate the action of the scene when these familiar characters were played by the imperturbably humorous KEELEY and the imitably droll BUCKSTONE.

As the suffering *Hero* Miss MIRIAM CLEMENTS was sympathetic, but on this occasion, it seemed to me, the arrangement of her hair did not set her off to the greatest advantage. As her wrongs are redressed so should her hair be. It would be unjust to deliver a final verdict on the *Beatrice* of Miss WINIFRED EMERY after this first night's performance. She was evidently nervous, and at first her voice seemed scarcely strong enough to give sufficient point to sharp sayings that require the accompaniment of a bright good-humoured smile and the merry twinkle of laughing eyes. When the sense of the responsibility she has undertaken shall have become less overpowering, then no doubt her smile will be beaming and never in the slightest degree cynical, and with increase of physical energy her delivery of the command "Kill *Claudio*!" will electrify the house. It is principally for this great effect that *Beatrice*, as a dramatic part, exists.

As *Benedick*, Mr. TREE, after a few nights, will, as the ballad has it, "smile as he was wont to smile before this weight of care" in getting up and superintending the Shakspearian drama had sadly depressed him. He was at his best in his earliest scene with *Beatrice*, and at his very best when, becoming intensely serious, he breaks off all acquaintance with his companion *Don Pedro*, and with quiet dignity challenges his dear friend *Claudio* to mortal combat. Everything that could be done for the success of the play has been done; although the scene in the side chapel of some grand church is not so effective a "set" as it might have been, nor can the stage management be here pronounced faultless. This side-chapel scene, however, is notable for the admirable performance and clear enunciation of Mr. WILLIAM HAVILAND as the kindly, dignified, and most paternal *Friar Francis*, the officiating priest. His performance is quite one of the gems of a memorable revival that will assuredly attract all playgoers to His Majesty's for some time to come.

AUTHORS AND ATHLETICS.

By LEVESON TILES, B.A.

THE recent and almost simultaneous announcements that Mr. HALL CAINE had taken to tobogganing in the Engadine and that GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO had been struck in the eye by a snowball, have naturally created a painful impression, absorbing public attention to the eclipse of all other topics, and revived the oft-debated question whether men of letters should or should not descend into the arena of athletics.

Speaking *ex cathedra* as the apostle of physical culture, I assert that there can be only one answer to this question. Logic, theosophy, and mental science alike insist that the brain should not be cultivated at the expense of the body. Life is a rhythm, and though the pen is mightier than the sword, a man whose brain-measurement exceeds that of his chest is seldom able to cope successfully with all the emergencies of life's handicap. Though strong men lived before AGAMEMNON, stronger men have lived since. But here, as in every other department of human activity, there is need of discretion and discrimination, and, at the risk of being charged with inconsistency, I lift my voice in poignant protest against the incursion of our leading men of letters into the domain of violent athletics, perilous pastime and dangerous sport. Our novelists, as the statistics of our free libraries convincingly prove, are one of our greatest national assets. In sheer popularity they dispute the palm of precedence with our leading jockeys and billiard-players. They minister more liberally to the needs of our great and enterprising newspaper proprietors than any other class in the community. Their noble and expressive lineaments, stimulating the ingenuous youth to emulate their splendid efforts, shine forth at us like beacon fires from picture post-cards and illustrated journals. They are household words in all strata of our social system, "from the sovereign sitting on his throne to the labourer sitting on his cottage"—I make no excuse for quoting the famous phrase of an illustrious peer of my acquaintance. They have superseded the pulpit and relegated the playwright to obscurity.

To allow such men—the idols of the populace, the arch-benefactors of their species—to expose themselves unnecessarily to loss of life or limb is a slur alike on the good sense and gratitude of the nation. It is an attitude that I for one can never bring myself to accept, and if this appeal of mine be fruitless I would ask all who are interested in the matter to co-operate with me in bringing pressure upon Parliament to introduce legislation rendering it a penal offence for any novelist with a circulation of



"AT ONE FELL SWOOP."

Wife. "WELL, DID YE FIND TH' PUDDIN' I LEFT FOR YOU IN THE SAUCEPAN?"

Collier (whose favourite dish is boiled puddings). "Oh, AY; I FOUND IT RIGHT ENOUGH. IT WERE A STUNNER!"

Wife. "DID YOU TAKE THE CLOTH OFF?"

Collier (after a pause). "WERE THERE A CLOTH ON?"

more than twenty thousand to take part, except as a spectator, in football, cricket, polo, hunting, lion or other big-game shooting, hockey, and tip-cat.

But, it will be objected, how, if thus restricted, can the writers of adventurous romance, novels of strong incident, and detective stories gain the necessary groundwork of experience on which to rear the towering superstructures of imagination? The argument is plausible, but it betrays a strange and reprehensible misconception of the workings of genius. The man who only writes of what he has seen or experienced condemns himself to the category of the photographer. On the other hand, the less he relies on experience the more is he compelled to cultivate

the nobler qualities of invention and intuition. Lord BEACONSFIELD had never conversed with a coronetted wearer of strawberry leaves when he wrote *The Young Duke*.

Apart from this invigorating exercise of the imaginative faculties, which is promoted by the absence of experience, there can be no doubt whatever that far more entertainment is provided by writers whose descriptions are emancipated from the trammels of expert knowledge than by those who merely record what they have seen and heard. The essential element in recreation, as a great writer has put it, is surprise, and the surest guarantee for its presence is to be found in a blissful ignorance of actuality. Personally

I no longer wish to read of the delights of tobogganing as described by Mr. HALL CAINE, because such a narrative is sure to be vitiated by some correspondence with fact. But should he dilate on the joys of a journey in a flying machine, the fearful delights of the pearl diver, the emotions of the captain of a submarine, or of a Duke's daughter at her first ball, I should come to the perusal of his narrative with unabated zest, with unimpaired anticipation of something rich and strange.

So far I have merely dwelt on the literary and aesthetic reasons in favour of removing romantic genius from the arena of action. There remains, however, the still more potent and irresistible argument that dangerous pastimes are not conducive to longevity. We cannot afford to allow our really great men—those whose writings are richest in the divine properties of unction, sentimentality, and overslop—to run any unnecessary risks. They must be forced to husband their priceless energies and not exhaust them in ill-timed efforts to emulate the short-lived fame of a HERCULES, a SAMSON, or a MILO. It is not as if they were cut off by the exigencies of their professional career from indulging in adequate exercise. Dictating for several hours daily to a phonograph, a typewriter, or a shorthand-writer; posing to photographers; conversing with interviewers—these and other exercises of the larynx and the facial muscles germane to their noble calling surely suffice their natural desire to lead the strenuous life. I conclude therefore with an earnest and prayerful entreaty to Mr. HALL CAINE and his *confrères* to refrain from further efforts to assert in the domain of physical culture the *maestria* they have already displayed in the sphere of literary achievement.

THE RULING PASSION.

ASK me no more; others may seek the tee;
Caddies may stoop for sand, and mould,
as bid,

A pointed or a truncate pyramid,
For BROWN, and JONES, and you—but not
for me.

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: my answer is the same.
I loathe my cleek and mashie, now
that I

(As witness every single stroke I try)
Have gone irrevocably off my game.

Ask me no more.

Ask me no more; my final doom is
sealed—

To "see a Specialist" were wholly vain;
No, I shall never touch a club again. . . .
"You'll give a third—for half-a-crown"—
I yield!

I ask no more.

THE ALBUM.

I SUPPOSE I had better make full confession about the beastly thing. Perhaps somebody will be able to find excuses for me. In my own eyes I acted throughout as an honourable man should do, but Miss MIFFIN has called me a story-teller. . . .

The thing started in the Miffin drawing-room, where ELEANORA was giving me tea. Without any warning she said: "Oh, now you're here you must write in my album."

"Certainly," I said. I thought it was a matter of a signature and a date.

"How good of you!"

"Not at all. Where's a pen? I'll do it now."

"Oh, you clever person!" said Miss MIFFIN. "How can you think of these difficult things straight off? Will it be verse or prose?" She landed me the album and a pen.

"Oh! I thought you only wanted my signature."

"Oh no, I want something original and clever. But then if you write it it's sure to be that."

I agreed with her.

"Perhaps you had better take the book home," she went on, "and you can send it back to me to-night."

We talked about other things, and then I rose to go. I had got safely down the steps when she came rushing after me.

"You were forgetting about the book," she said, and placed it tenderly in my hands.

Well, I got the thing home, put it in a corner, and there one might have thought was the end of the business. But no. Three days later I got a card: "How's the album going on? E. M." I replied, "Album maintains its *status quo*." The next morning I had a long letter from ELEANORA saying that she didn't understand my card. Had I written in her album yet? If not, would I please do so at once, and return it to her? I replied that I was at that moment engaged upon a set of verses for it; and that they seemed to me, though perhaps I was prejudiced, to be both winsome and pathetic. I felt sure she would like them. Having posted this letter, I opened the album and wrote upon a rich coffee-coloured page which was vacant:

"The darkling sun rose in the west."

That line is obviously the beginning of a set of verses, and has a pathos all its own. So far at any rate Miss MIFFIN was not justified in calling me a story-teller.

A week afterwards ELEANORA wrote from the country to say that she was returning to town that day, and expected to find the album waiting for her. I

immediately wrote to her country address to ask if she would not after all prefer prose. The letter went down to Gloucestershire and back, thus giving me an extra day in peace.

Miss MIFFIN's reply was that it could be anything I liked so long as I came to lunch on Sunday and brought her book with me. This was serious, and I decided that the thing could no longer be delayed. I got the book out and read through it. Most of the contributions were pitiable.

Miss ELEANORA MIFFIN has called me a story-teller, but none the less I give you my word of honour that from ten till four that day I slaved at her poem. I can bring forward five other Government clerks as witnesses. The result was a rondeau, "To the Owner of the Book"—and as soon as I got home I copied it out on to a pale pink page. This done, I went out in my pride and telegraphed "Poem finished."

When I came back I read the poem again, and it seemed amazingly good. It showed up the badness of the other poems (particularly one by Mrs. MIFFIN) in a perfectly cruel way. I am a man of gentle heart, and I did not wish to hurt Mrs. MIFFIN's feelings. Furthermore I felt that there were people, other than ELEANORA's friends, who might care to read my verses. So, after much thought, I tore the page carefully out, and sent it to my cousin GEORGE, who edits one of the monthlies. I altered one line, and called it "To a Flirt." GEORGE gave me thirty shillings for it, and it was illustrated with a picture of a Greek maiden in what I can only hope wasn't really the entire Greek costume.

But the illustration and the thirty shillings of course came later. In the meantime I had to devise another poem. I turned to the work of Mrs. MIFFIN again, as a guide to what would pass in ELEANORA's album. And then I made the horrible discovery that in tearing out my poem I had loosened her page and lost it.

In what followed my conduct is, I think, described better as that of a man of resource than as that of a story-teller. I may claim to have acted with that spirit and coolness which has made us Englishmen what we are.

I drove up on the Sunday in a hansom. ELEANORA welcomed me with enthusiasm and asked for her album.

"I'm simply longing to read your poem," she assured me.

I fell into a chair with what I took to be a horror-struck expression.

"Great Scott!" I gasped.

"You don't mean to say—"

"I must have left it in the cab! Well, I'm—"

I dashed out of the room and opened the front door. Luckily the cab had gone.

"It's gone!" I said.
 "Oh, how *could* you be so careless! How could you— Did you take the number of the cab?"
 "I'm afraid not," I explained. "You see, I didn't know I should want it."
 "How like a man!"
 "Wait a bit. It was something like 4731."
 "4731? Good! Then——"
 "It wasn't 4731," I said hastily; "but something of that style. That was the idea."

Lunch was a strained meal. I left under vows to recover the album or die.
 "Ask at Scotland Yard first thing to-morrow," were ELEANORA's parting words.

A month rolled by very pleasantly after this, and I hoped that I had heard the last of the matter. At the beginning Miss MIFFIN had written daily to ask how the search was getting on. After the fourth letter I replied stiffly that the matter was now in the hands of the police, who would brook no interference from outsiders; that unless we gave them a perfectly free hand we should never recover the album. This stopped her inquiries, and peace settled down upon my life.

But at the end of the month I found that I was not yet out of my trouble. I heard from a friend that ELEANORA MIFFIN was telling all her acquaintances of my extreme carelessness, and, as she said, rudeness. The MIFFINS and I have many common friends, and I did not wish to have my character dissected before them. So, on an ever-memorable day, I wired, "Album found. Am bringing it round this afternoon." Then I hunted about my rooms, and at last discovered the thing in a heap of rubbish in an old cupboard.

The album and I arrived at four o'clock. I told a graphic story of a dying cabman smitten with remorse, but I could see that ELEANORA was the least bit suspicious of me. Still she was extremely pleased to have the album again, and watched me eagerly as I turned over the pages to find my own poem.

After a five minutes' search for it, I said:

"It was on a pink page, and corresponded with one of your mother's. If you remember where she wrote——"

"Mother was near the beginning, next to Father's."

We found Father's, and then—! Once again that horror-struck expression passed over my face.

"It's gone!" I said hoarsely.

Miss MIFFIN looked coldly at me. I sat up.

"I can see what's happened," I said. "What a clever blackguard that cabman was!"



SO UNSELFISH!

"OH YES, I GAVE MY HUSBAND A MOTOR-CAR ON HIS BIRTHDAY."

"BUT I THOUGHT HE DIDN'T LIKE MOTOR-CARS?"

"HE DOESN'T. BUT I DO!"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, he looked through the album, and read that extraordinarily clever poem of your mother's. He saw at once what a valuable 'find' had fallen into his hands, and he tore out the page, and probably sold it to some Magazine as his own. I daresay he'd get a fiver for it. Of course, my poem got loose in consequence and fell out."

I beamed at her. It was really a brilliant explanation, and so flattering to her mother.

"I don't quite understand," said

ELEANORA. "I suppose you saw that that poem was by ELIZA COOK. You didn't really think that mother wrote it? It's a well-known one of ELIZA COOK'S."

"Impossible," I said. "The handwriting was much too good. Besides, I've always heard you call her MARY. Or was this the one before MARY came?"

"ELIZA COOK is a well-known poetess."

"Oh heavens!" I said. "Well, how could a cabman be expected to know, if I didn't? How——"

It was then that Miss MIFFIN called me a story-teller.



A VILLAGE FIASCO.

Gifted Amateur (concluding pet card trick). "Now, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, YOU HAVE SEEN THE PACK OF CARDS BURN BEFORE YOUR EYES, AND THE ASHES PLACED INSIDE THE BOX, WHICH MYSTERIOUSLY TRANSFORMED ITSELF INTO A RABBIT, WHICH, IN TURN, DISAPPEARED INTO SPACE. I WILL NOW ASK THIS GENTLEMAN TO NAME THE CARD HE SELECTED, WHEN IT WILL AT ONCE APPEAR IN MY HAND. NOW, SIR, WHAT CARD DID YOU SELECT FROM THE PACK?"

Giles (who has been following the trick most intently). "BLESSED IF I RECOLLECT!"

AN INTERCEPTED LETTER.

TRÈS CHER COUSIN, — Mais c'est superbe! Vous êtes absolument au premier rang. Pour moi, qui suis vieux, souffrant, fatigué de tout, ces plaisirs-là deviennent de plus en plus impossibles. Et pourtant j'ai arrangé pas mal de luttes sanguinaires. Les Arméniens, par exemple. Mais pour moi c'est fini. Quant à vous ça commence, et d'une façon épataante.

Jusqu'ici vous avez fait comme moi. Toujours des gens plus ou moins étrangers; à Blagovestshenk des Chinois, à Kishineff des Juifs. C'était à peu près comme mes Arméniens, et en effet pas extraordinaire. Mais l'autre jour ces centaines d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants, de la même race et de la même foi que vous, c'est éblouissant! C'est à n'y pas croire! Je reste ébahi, ahuri; je me sens vaincu; je n'ai plus droit au titre que ces drôles d'Anglais

ont inventé; je vous le cède, et je me retire.

Vraiment, je dois l'avouer, j'ai éprouvé pendant quelques instants une certaine malaise, une sensation inaccoutumée de dégoût et de pitié, car, voyez-vous, je n'aurais jamais fait disperser comme ça des gens de ma race et de ma religion. Vous n'avez pas hésité. Vous êtes plus fort que moi, le "Grand Assassin" en retraite, et vous avez montré à l'Occident les mœurs inflexibles et impitoyables de l'Orient.

Je ne sais pas précisément votre adresse. Chez nous on a toujours eu l'habitude de se cacher pendant de tels événements. C'est une bonne occasion de faire une petite excursion, même en mer. Si vous quittez votre pays, venez me voir. On n'est pas mal ici, et la vue est renommée. Nous passerons quelques bonnes journées ensemble à causer de nos affaires.

Rappelez-moi au bon souvenir de vos

braves parents, les Grands Ducs. J'aurai le plaisir de leur faire cadeau d'une quantité de champagne des meilleurs crus, qui m'est inutile à présent, car je ne reçois plus personne qui en boit. On l'aime bien, à ce qu'il paraît, chez les Giaours et surtout chez vous.

J'avais l'idée de vous offrir un ancien cimetière, que l'on dit avoir été celui de SALADIN. Mais c'était un guerrier qui se jetait témérairement au milieu des combats. Vous n'êtes pas précisément de ce genre-là. Vous vous tenez à l'écart, même à l'abri, des luttes. Je vous envoie donc, en signe de profonde admiration et de sincère amitié, un bouclier, orné de quelques bijoux, qui appartenait à SÉLIM I^{er}. On y voit encore des taches de sang.

Votre tout dévoué ABDUL HAMID.

CONCILIATORY. — "Wanted, plain family's WASH." — *Advt. in "Southport Visitor."*



THE CZAR OF ALL THE RUSSIAS.

WEDDING PRESENTS.

(By a Victim.)

As soon as MAY had named the day
She issued invitations
To all the crew our mothers knew
(Including poor relations).
We were aware they all would swear
In language far from pleasant,
"Confound it! I shall have to buy
The blessed pair a present."

Then boy and man in cart and van
And motor-car came driving,
With gifts galore, and more and more,
And still they kept arriving;
And housemaids flew, and postmen too,
Till all the terrace wondered,
And night and day they rang away—
Lord! how the knocker thundered!

We worked in shifts upon the gifts;
And when we had unstrung them,
We'd twenty score of forks and more,
But not a knife among them;
And as we two had scarce a sou,
There seemed to be a caret
When silly mugs gave claret jugs,
But not a drop of claret.

We'd endless gongs, and sugar-tongs
Of every shape and fashion,
As if sweet tea was bound to be
Henceforth our ruling passion;
We'd sachets, too, of pink and blue,
With sickly perfumes scented,
And oh! the show of *art nouveau*
With which we were presented!

And, now we've got the little lot,
We're under obligation
To every guest we most detest,
And every poor relation;
And by the time the church bells chime,
And Hymen ties the true knot,
We find—too late—we've all we hate,
And nothing that we do not.

FIRST AID FOR HEROES AND VILLAINS.

No author need now have the faintest compunction in brutally killing off the central character of his novel. Judging from the resurrection of *She* after having been consumed by fire; of *Sherlock Holmes* and the villain of *The Motor Pirate*, resuscitated like the late *Sherlock Holmes* after having disappeared over a cliff, any author possessed of sufficient ingenuity may bring back to life his "creation" from however final a fate. This is the kind of thing:—

EXAMPLE I.

Chapter XXX.—"Dulce et decorum est"— . . . And with a half sob "SLOGGER" LOVEFACE sank to the earth riddled by a hundred bullets. As evening fell the shouts of battle drew further away, and the vultures came swooping down on the young hero's shattered body.



"A PORTRAIT—AFTER GAINSBOROUGH."

(Mr. Chamberlain addresses a great meeting at Gainsborough on February 1.)

Sequel.—Chapter I.—The marvellous recuperative powers of the air of South Africa are well known. Never, perhaps, did they bring about a more remarkable recovery than in the case of Lord EDWARD LOVEFACE, better known as "SLOGGER." Seated in a Kaffir hut one glorious day in June, &c., &c.

EXAMPLE II.

Chapter LX. . . . For a moment JASPAR QUICK stood paralysed. Then, with a cry of horror he ran swiftly towards his horse. But it was too late. The earth trembled violently, all creation seemed agitatedly to move, a roar as of a million cannon shook the air, the ground opened, and JASPAR QUICK disappeared. The earthquake at which he had scoffed not an hour before had over-(we may almost say, under-) taken him!

Sequel.—Chapter I. . . . Melbourne! The pitiless sun beating down on that city of &c., &c. In the coffee-room of a comfortable private hotel JASPAR QUICK sat at breakfast. Save for a slight

whiteness of the hair about the temples there was nothing in the appearance of the famous criminal to indicate that he had been passed completely through the earth some six months previously in that appalling catastrophe of '15. . . .

A Mixed Bag.

We extract the following from the catalogue of a sale recently held at the Army and Navy Auxiliary Stores:—

239 A leather hand-bag, containing brass curtain pole fittings, a floor polishing brush, a trivet, a large iron saucepan, a brass coffee machine, a saucepan lid stand, a poker, a Windsor chair, a toast fork, a decanter drainer, a japanned coal vase, a coal scuttle, a slop pail, a water can, and a hand basket.

BLESSING AND CURSING.—It is reported that just about the time when the Czar was blessing the Neva, the Japs at Port Arthur were considering whether they should dam the harbour.

LIFE'S LITTLE DIFFICULTIES.

XI.—THE BOX.

I.

Mrs. Smythe-Smith to Mrs. Clisby.

DEAR MRS. CLISBY,—I wonder if you would care to use the enclosed box for the Mausoleum Theatre on Thursday week. We intended to go ourselves, but my husband finds that he will have to travel North that day in connection with an important case. With kind regards, I am,

Yours truly,

RUTH SMYTHE-SMITH.

II.

Mrs. Clisby to Mrs. Henderson.

MY DEAR MRS. HENDERSON,—Would you and Mr. HENDERSON care to join us at the Mausoleum on Thursday week? We have a box for that night, and should be so glad if you would look in. Just ask for Mrs. CLISBY's box. With kind regards, I am,

Yours sincerely, MABEL CLISBY.

III.

Mrs. Clisby to her sister Mrs. Thoms.

MY DEAR SOPHY,—Our friends the SMYTHE-SMITHS (he is the barrister) have sent us a box, which they are unfortunately prevented from using, for the Mausoleum on Thursday week. Will you and HENRY join us? We are also asking some nice people we met at Matlock in the summer—the HENDERSONS. Mr. HENDERSON is in an important position at Lloyd's, and his wife, who is very charming, is a cousin of Sir Wilson ARKSTONE, who built the Severn Bridge.

Your loving M.

IV.

Mrs. Thoms to Mrs. Clisby.

DEAR MABEL,—We shall love to come to the theatre with you. But AGGIE insists on coming too, and bringing BERTIE RAWLER with her. I am sure you won't mind, she has so few pleasures, and BERTIE, who is always so considerate, can stand at the back if we are at all crowded. He is quite like one of ourselves already, and I have no compunction in asking him to do all kinds of little things like this. If only he could get some permanent and lucrative employment, we should be so happy. At present he is an agent for a new kind of combined fountain pen and office ruler, which he is trying very hard to introduce into the city, but without much success, I am afraid.

Your loving S.

V.

Mrs. Clisby to Mrs. Thoms.

MY DEAR SOPHY,—I am very sorry to

have to disappoint you, but really I don't see how we can manage Mr. RAWLER on Thursday night. I am sure that eight will be plenty, and FRANK, who is so impetuous, entirely without my knowledge has asked a Mr. FLACK, an American over here on business, to whom he wishes to show some kindness, to join us. So that if AGGIE comes, and I am so sorry to have forgotten to mention the dear girl when I wrote first, we shall be eight—four couples—without Mr. RAWLER.

Your loving M.

VI.

Mrs. Thoms to Mrs. Clisby.

DEAR MABEL,—It does not matter about BERTIE. We have arranged that he shall go to the Upper Circle and come and see us between the acts. Do tell me a little more about Mr. FLACK. What is his business? Some Americans can be very attractive. I suppose he has left his wife and family in America?

Your loving S.

VII.

Mrs. Clisby to Mrs. Thoms.

MY DEAR SOPHY,—If Mr. RAWLER is coming to see us between the acts I think he ought to dress. Couldn't he get a seat in the Dress Circle?

Your loving M.

VIII.

Mrs. Thoms to Mrs. Clisby.

DEAR MABEL,—Of course BERTIE will dress. Going to the theatre is no novelty for him. He was at school with two of WILSON BARRETT's sons. You do not answer my question about Mr. FLACK. I always like to know in advance something about the people I am going to meet.

Your loving S.

IX.

Mrs. Clisby to Mrs. Thoms.

(By hand.)

MY VERY DEAR SOPHY,—A most unfortunate thing has happened. Chancing to be in the neighbourhood this morning, FRANK looked in at the theatre just to see in the plan where our box was, and perhaps mention to one of the officials that you and the HENDERSONS would be asking for it in the evening. To his horror he found that it was a top box, capable of holding four persons at the most, two of whom could not see the stage except by leaning over very uncomfortably. It is unpardonable of Mrs. SMYTHE-SMITH not to have told me. The question now is, What shall we do? After thinking it over very carefully I wonder if you would mind postponing your visit to the theatre for a while until there is a better play—the papers seem to think very little of the thing now on—and bringing Mr. RAWLER to

dinner on Sunday at half-past one. It is so very difficult for me to put off the HENDERSONS. I am so sorry to have to ask you to be so unselfish, but blood is thicker than water, isn't it?

Your loving M.

P.S.—Mr. FLACK seems to be a man of means. He is connected with a new patent, and we are very glad to be able to do something to make his time in London less lonely. FRANK in putting him off will make some other arrangement.

X.

Mrs. Thoms to Mrs. Clisby.

(By hand.)

DEAR MABEL,—What a pity you did not find out how many the box would hold. I had a feeling, as I mentioned to HENRY quite at the first, that you were asking too many. Of course we should like to come to dinner on Sunday, and will do so with pleasure; but I can't help thinking that the best thing to do now is for you to telegraph to the HENDERSONS that you are ill and have given the box away, and then to take just AGGIE and Mr. FLACK. The poor girl badly needs a little excitement, and it would be very unfortunate if FRANK had to be discourteous to this young American.

Your loving S.

XI.

Mrs. Clisby to Mrs. Thoms.

(By hand.)

DEAR SOPHY,—Before your reply came I had written to the HENDERSONS putting them off, but a telegram came from them almost immediately after to say that they would not be able to come, as Mrs. H. has influenza. I am so vexed that I wrote. By all means let AGGIE come and meet Mr. FLACK. Did I tell you he is quite elderly? His wife came to England with him, but has gone to Stratford-on-Avon and Salisbury for a few days.

Your loving M.

XII.

Mrs. Thoms to Mrs. Clisby.

(By hand.)

DEAR MABEL,—AGGIE cannot come after all, as BERTIE's brother is taking them to the Hippodrome. We will be punctual on Sunday, and very likely shall bring BERTIE's brother with us. I am sure you won't mind. Your loving S.

FROM the Manchester Evening News:

"French Taught by Parian Gentleman; terms moderate."

As nothing was said of marbles during hours of vacation the suspicions of the Advertisement Editor seemed to have been roused: and in the next issue a corrected version appeared:

"French Taught by Parsian Gentleman."



EASIER SAID THAN DONE.

Sixteen-stone Sportsman (who has been nearly put down over a "rotten" landing, to *Little Binks*, 9c. 2). "Do you mind putting me back in the saddle, Sir?"

HARLEQUIN AND THE HEROINE;
Or, *How the Maiden of Melodramia fared
in the Regions of Pantomimia.*

PART III.

PREPARATIONS for the nuptials were well advanced, and it wanted little of the appointed time, when, finding myself alone with the Baron in the narrow trysting-place known locally as *Near the Castle*, I entreated an explanation of the words that had perplexed me at our last interview.

"Tell me," said I, speaking rather loudly to drown the noise of hammering which was distinctly audible behind us, "tell me, I beg of you, what did you mean by going to the Halls?"

"Don't you know?" replied the Baron; "the Halls are where we live when it isn't Christmas-time. Turns, you know, and all that."

"Turns?" I repeated vaguely.

"Yes, of course," said my Uncle. "What else? We all do 'em. Your Aunt and I are refined knock-about, and the Prince does patriotism and cake-walks."

"But," I stammered, a suspicion of the awful truth breaking upon me, "surely I—?"

"Of course, now you are one of us, you'll do the same," said the Baron. "I fancy your line will be something in the serio-comic. You wear short skirts and a sun-bonnet. It's quite easy."

To say that I was aghast would be to understate the truth.

"Alas!" I exclaimed. "You know not what you are saying. You forget that I am the one figure in dramatic literature that never changes, whose misfortunes and whose sorrows are invariably the same. Uncle," I pleaded, "I am almost a formula; do not, pray do not, ask me to become a marionette!"

"I'm afraid," said he, "that it cannot be helped now, and really I think the change would be an improvement. Anyhow," he added, "it will be a beautiful wedding."

I made no response.

"You shall wear three large ostrich plumes and a necklace of electric lights," continued the kind old gentleman. "Afterwards, there will be a ballet entitled *The Triumph of Cupid*, also acrobats, a tramp cyclist, and a man who does lightning cartoons. No one shall say that we denied you these simple comforts. I have also," he added, smiling, "a little personal surprise in store; you shall see what it is at the ceremony. Half-time!"

Inwardly I reflected that to see myself there would be all the surprise I should need, but, unwilling to pain him, I said nothing more, and soon afterwards he bustled away upon his preparations.

What a position was I now in! Fated (unless I could even yet escape) to an existence of silk stockings and a perpetual smile, the prospect caused the very blood to freeze in my veins. Lacking strength even to swoon, I looked round wildly for Sir RUPERT. I longed for one of his familiar curses to prove to me that I was not utterly alone. How bitterly I regretted having left dear Papa and my old lover Jack, whose lofty sentiments and simple attire I contrasted mentally with the masquerade of yonder Princely buffoon. But alas! even Sir RUPERT had vanished since the failure in the banqueting hall, and I had perforce to wait till the actual moment of the wedding at which (being in the concluding Act) he would be bound to be present.

The ceremony was arranged to take place in the Hall of Dazzling Light, as



Their entrance in line.

my Uncle had, somewhat ostentatiously, named his principal reception room. Concealed behind a pillar in this apartment, I watched the magnificent crowd of guests as it trooped glittering down the marble staircase to appropriate music.

Very unwillingly I had permitted myself to be attired in a costume consisting principally of spangles and incandescent lamps, quite unsuitable to my severe and classic type of beauty.

So habited, it had been arranged by my Uncle (whose conception of a beautiful wedding was somewhat transatlantic) that I should conclude the procession by appearing hand in hand with the Prince beneath a floral canopy upheld by members of the flying ballet.

But how different were my emotions from those which I had anticipated! Terror had now taken the place of pride, the shadow of some half-comprehended doom seemed to brood over the festive scene. Dimly I wondered what was happening at dear old Meadowsweet,

and what would be my parent's anguish could he but behold the position of his only daughter.

Suddenly, even as I thought thus, I saw something which caused the very blood to freeze within my veins. (It will be noticed that I am liable to this species of chill.) Close to me, mingling with the crowd, I perceived Cousin Flo, Papa, the pantomime villain, and my old lover Jack. But with what unspeakable shame did I behold them? What horrid enchantment had so altered the familiar reverence of my relative's demeanour? In a flash I understood. The pantomime atmosphere imported by Cousin Flo and her companion had proved too strong for the purer air of Melodramia, and the fusion of the two elements had produced that hybrid known as Musical Comedy.

There could be no doubt about it. My father and my ex-lover, once so serenely calm, were now pronounced specimens of this unspeakable type. It needed not poor Papa's Trilby hat, his curly whiskers, or his loud check suit to convince me; their entrance in line, each with a hand upon his neighbour's shoulder, and one leg held out at right angles, would alone have betrayed the shameful truth.

This then was the surprise which my Uncle had predicted; it was one indeed!

Pale with horror I turned to behold Sir RUPERT RUTHERFORD standing beside me. He looked older and more careworn than when I had last seen him, and his face wore the haggard expression of one engaged in a hopeless struggle with fate. In his hands was a cigarette-case—empty.

"Aha!" he hissed, making, I could observe, a violent effort to keep his teeth clenched. "Aha, my dainty Rose!" Then a spasm appeared to seize him. "Why," he asked suddenly, "is Lord KITCHENER like a potato?"

From these awful words I realised that the fatal influence of the place had spread even to him. "I don't know what made me say that," he added despondently. "I've been trying not to for days."

In a moment I had made up my mind. There was little time to lose, for already reminiscences of WAGNER were heralding the appearance of the bridal pair. I could see the Prince, in a garment of glittering silver with white ostrich plumes in his hat, searching distractedly for me. Obviously the end was close at hand.

"RUPE," I whispered hastily (and the contraction was significant), "RUPE, let us fly from here ere it be too late! Let us join hands and seek some distant spot to which this curse of Humour cannot penetrate. You have still your dress clothes, and I have my moral influence; with these let us give

Shakspearian recitals at local Temperance Halls—there at least there will be no amusement!"

Silently I held out my hands, he clasped them, and without a word we stole from the spot, while behind us the music swelled to a climax.

What happened when our flight was discovered, whether the wedding was stopped, or whether Cousin Flo resumed her old place, and in due course entered those mysterious Halls for which she was so obviously suited, I may never know. Sir RUPERT and I dwell in a world far removed from such frivolity.

Lately, however, strange rumours have reached us of "incidents" and "sketches," which by their extension may yet render these places fit even for a lady of such unblemished boredom as my own. In that case—Dear RUPERT has been looking over my shoulder, so I will end with his own words, words that he is never weary of repeating:

"Mark me, a time will come—"

CHARIVARIA.

RECENT events in St. Petersburg tend to show that, given favourable conditions, the Russian Army, no less than the Baltic Fleet, can gain victories.

Meanwhile the outlook generally in Russia is so threatening that it is not at all impossible that the Czar may have to go to Manchuria for safety.

Two French newspapers have so far forgotten the traditions of Gallic politeness as to open subscription lists for the benefit of the relatives of those slaughtered in St. Petersburg.

The Czar's Address has now been published. A few days ago there were many versions of it. We know now that it was Tsarskoe Selo.

Three little lions have been born at Haslemere Park, in Buckinghamshire. In these days of physical deterioration it is good to know that this country can still breed them.

Admiral FREMANTLE has stated that, as some persons seemed to be holding back from participation in the forth-

coming Naval Exhibition at Earl's Court from fear of wounding the feelings of other nations, he could assure them that there would be no display of arrogance. Indeed, we understand that some of our defective gun-sights will be on view.

It is hoped, by the by, that it will be possible to secure, as an exhibit, a British Merchant Sailor.

Mr. ARNOLD-FORSTER having declared that he was not satisfied with what the public schools were doing for the Army, the Headmaster of Eton has written a spirited letter in defence of the WARRE-training of that College.

Mr. HANBURY AGGS, according to a newspaper paragraph, has been adopted as Liberal candidate for the Everton

This explains why the surviving relatives are always in black.

A play entitled *Much Ado about Nothing* has been produced at His Majesty's Theatre. It is founded on a play of the same name by SHAKESPEARE.

"New Bill at the Lyceum!" runs an announcement. We were certainly getting a bit tired of BAILEY.

The weakness of the Drury Lane management in excising those parts of the pantomime to which the *Daily Mail* in its "outrageous attack" took exception continues to excite comment.

"Frenchmen's latest amusement," says the *Royal Magazine*, "is to fly inflated figures of grotesque appearance, which, with a slight push, soar upward into the air, and come slowly to the ground." Poor M. COMBES!

Some surprise is being expressed that the *Magazine of Short Stories* should be unrepresented at the Dogger Bank Inquiry.

It is a pity that the opponents of Alien Immigration are not more careful as to their facts. Last week's issue of the *Family Doctor* contained the following

statement:—"Out of 100 new patients treated at one of the London eye hospitals, no fewer than 102 were aliens." We need scarcely point out that this is a gross exaggeration.

A propos of Aliens, we notice that the Postmaster-General received, last week, a deputation protesting against the disfigurement of the country by ugly telegraph Poles.

Coco, the wonderful monkey, promises to bring so much gold to the Palace Theatre that that place of entertainment is regarded as a veritable Cocos Island.

The Ameer of AFGHANISTAN has asked for a seaport, and it is rumoured that Margate will be given to him.

NEW TITLE FOR THE CZAR.—The Little White Feather.



LADIES AT HOCKEY.

(From an old Print.)

division of Liverpool, and many ignorant persons are asking, Who is he? AGGS, of course, is AGGS.

One of the latest additions to the "Carmelite Music" is *Resignation*. A good deal of it is in the air.

It is thought possible that, when the Dissolution takes place, Mr. BALFOUR may finish Lord BEACONSFIELD'S uncompleted novel.

The Metropolitan Water Board has decided to issue more stock. Will this be what is known as Watered Stock?

We are sorry to hear that there has been a considerable number of ice disasters at Juvenile parties lately.

According to Professor MEEK the death-rate among lobsters is tremendous, only one in 40,000 reaching maturity.

OUR BOOKING-OFFICE.

My Nautical Retainer writes: One is apt to despair of English criticism when a novel like MAY SINCLAIR'S *The Divine Fire* (CONSTABLE) goes almost unregarded. Possibly our conductors are themselves guided by established reputations: and Miss SINCLAIR'S was yet to make. She was not Mrs. HUMPHRY WARD, for instance, and she was not Mr. HENRY JAMES. Yet the one might well envy the delightful humour that here tempers a very perfect sincerity, and the other might admire how an analytic subtlety as delicate as his own could avoid obscurity and a too laboured finesse. Miss SINCLAIR'S intuition—for experience would never have embraced such a diversity of types—is something more than feminine. With an astonishing certainty of touch she realises her bold conception of *Rickman*, the poet with the "divine fire," and the chilling heritage of dropped aspirates; the man whose instinct for the best in art and in honour delivers him unburnt from the banality of his environment, and yet leaves him human and no prig. With equal certainty she presents *Horace Jeudwine*, the finished product of Oxford dondom, with his lofty generalisations on the Absolute, and his ultimate lapse into the corruption of popular journalism. More easily imagined, yet not less admirably executed, are her women portraits, covering a wide range, from *Lucia Harden*, of the fine intelligence and noble sympathies, to *Flossie Walker*, of the Bloomsbury boarding-house ideals, each (and *Poppy*, too, of the Halls) making her appeal to some quality, higher or lower, or something between, in the same man's nature.

Miss SINCLAIR is always quietly sure of herself. That is why she will not be hurried, but moves through her gradual scheme with so leasured a serenity; why her style, fluent and facile, never forces its natural eloquence; why her humour plays with a diffused light over all her work and seldom needs the advertisement of scintillating epigrams. Judged by almost every standard to which a comedy like this should be referred, I find her book the most remarkable that I have read for many years.

Fortunately in America, which has a vastly wider reading public, and, at times, a keener *flair* for genius, *The Divine Fire* has been received with instant enthusiasm. This must be Miss SINCLAIR'S consolation when she finds herself in the noble army of prophets and sibyls who have missed honour in their own countries.

Lady Penelope, by MORLEY ROBERTS (F. V. WHITE & Co.), is, reports one of my Assistant Readers, a high-spirited Society novel of the irresponsible type. With its bright dialogue and bustling incident it suggests possibilities of stage adaptation in the form of a rattling farcical comedy, though there are certain difficulties in the plot which a dramatist might find insuperable. The heroine, *Lady Penelope Brading*, has eight devoted suitors, a fanatical dislike of the vulgar publicity of smart weddings, and no sense of humour whatever. She subjects her unhappy suitors to a period of probation on the Ruskinian system, pairing them off in uncongenial couples with instructions to learn to tolerate one another, in the hope that she will eventually reward one of them with her hand, but on the distinct understanding that she will never let anyone know who her husband is, while he, whoever he may be, will also be expected to conceal the fact. Later, she invites her suitors, friends, and relations to a party, and informs them all that she has married one of them, but declines to say which. And when in due course an announcement appears in the Births column of the *Times*, it gives *Lady Penelope's* unmarried surname only, which naturally not only intensifies the mystery, but causes a scandal. Whereupon each suitor, from mistaken motives of chivalry, attempts to save his

lady's name by proclaiming himself as the husband. Hence more bewilderment, misunderstandings, assaults and batteries, wild pursuits and flights in motor-cars, and a general atmosphere of confusion and mystery that goes on thickening till the last page but one, when it is satisfactorily cleared by the arrival of the genuine husband. The mid-Victorian *Duchess of Goring*, the *Bishop of Spilsborough*, and *Bob*, the boy who has been taken away from three great public schools for fighting, are well-drawn and amusing characters, and altogether *Lady Penelope* may be recommended with some confidence to those in search of entertainment.

By all students of English literature, and by all admirers of the varied work of WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY, a book entitled *The Thackeray Country*, written by LEWIS MELVILLE, and recently published by Messrs. BLACK, will be most heartily welcomed. THACKERAY'S country, the land of his choice, was Bohemia; Upper, not Lower, Bohemia, rich in Johnsonian tradition, where men like *Warrington* and the once dandified *Pen* resided, in such chambers and amid such queer surroundings as caused *Major Pendennis*, from West-End Clubland, to shudder on the occasion of his first visit to this unfashionable quarter, when, being mistaken for the expected pot-boy, he was peremptorily bidden to "come in!" Not a few of the illustrations, those of the Temple, for example, seem somewhat unnecessary.

The Baron limits himself to three corrections, which he makes of his own personal knowledge. It was not DOUGLAS JERROLD but ANDREW ARCEDECKNE who, by way of congratulating THACKERAY on the reading in public of his first lecture on the *Four Georges*, said to him in his squeaky voice, with specially assumed, and peculiarly irritating, cockney manner, "Brayvo! Thack, my boy! Uncommon good show. But it'll never go *without a pianner*." As nearly as the Baron can remember, this is how ARCEDECKNE himself told it to him, thereby corroborating THACKERAY'S own version of the story, which the Baron heard from THACKERAY himself, on an exceptional occasion, when it was the Baron's privilege to be seated with him, PERCIVAL LEIGH, and MARK LEMON at the *Punch* dinner table after most of the company had left. Then it was that, as THACKERAY was recounting "the DICKENS and YATES affair" at the Garrick Club, he brought down his fist with such an emphatic thump on the arm of his chair that he considerably startled the youngest of the party. It was little ANDREW ARCEDECKNE, too, whose unexpected entrance into the Garrick smoking-room so disconcerted THACKERAY—who at the moment was in the middle of some humorous story, with which he was entertaining a circle of admirers—that he suddenly dried up, just as though he were an inexperienced and nervous young actor who had forgotten his part. Whereupon ARCEDECKNE, quietly lighting a cigar, addressed the great man, in a cheerfully patronising manner, with these delightfully inappropriate words, "Proceed, sweet warbler, your story interests me much." THACKERAY made no retort, but hastily left the room. This the Baron long, long ago had from the aforesaid ANDREW, whose society he much cultivated, and also from that inimitable *raconteur* SHIRLEY BROOKS. The third error is misspelling the Baron's family name both in the book and its index. Well—there's the danger of running into reminiscences—so the Baron pulls up short, and again recommends Mr. LEWIS MELVILLE'S book to all and sundry.

